

NASA Celebrates Earth Day 2004

This year our Nation marks the 34th celebration of Earth Day. I believe it is no coincidence that Earth Day began shortly after our Apollo astronauts photographed our majestic planet floating in space, providing us a new perspective on our home planet. Today, NASA is a major contributor to environmental stewardship through our Earth observation activities and environmental management efforts at our facilities.

In June, we will launch Aura, a NASA mission to study Earth's ozone, air quality, and climate and conduct research on the composition, chemistry, and dynamics of Earth's atmosphere. The already orbiting Aqua mission is allowing us to gather information about water in the Earth's system, including global precipitation, evaporation, and the cycling of water. This information is helping scientists all over the world to better understand the Earth's water cycle and determine if the water cycle is accelerating as a result of climate change.

In other exciting research we are partnering with NOAA and other Federal agencies to study the health of the Chesapeake Bay, with George Mason University to study the aquatic health of streams on our facilities that feed into the Chesapeake Bay, and with the State of Florida to restore mosquito impoundments back to salt marsh habitat while continuing effective mosquito control at the Kennedy Space Center.

We are also proud of NASA's positive environmental actions at our facilities and in partnership with our contractors. This year the NASA Shuttle Environmental Assurance Initiative and White Sands Test Facility won two Stratospheric Ozone Protection Awards – one for the replacement of the industrial solvent trichloroethane, or TCA, and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in critical Shuttle operations, and the other for eliminating CFC-113 in the final cleaning and verification processes for critical spacecraft parts and components.

Through our environmental initiatives we have demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate that we can improve life here even as we explore the world around us and worlds beyond. Working together, we can make a world of difference in creating a more sustainable future! That is our promise, which we have kept since our inception.

Please join me in celebrating Earth Day this year by participating in activities at Headquarters and acknowledging the efforts of our many colleagues across the Agency who strive to make every day Earth Day at NASA.

Sean O'Keefe
NASA Administrator